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WEEKLY

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IS FAR FROM
BURSTING!

ISSUE
17

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NATURE OF
THE MEDIUM

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the evolution of format
and broadcasting standards

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COVER STORY

Looking around after waking up from a dream, a girl faints a group of young girls with halos waiting above her... This is the premise of **Haibane-Renmei**, a recently-debuted TV anime series featuring character designs by ABe Yoshitoshi, popular for his detailed illustrations. The unique and expressive world featured in this work subtly combines with ABe's characters to infuse **Haibane-Renmei** with tremendous atmosphere. Flip to this week's Special Feature to get the full scoop on this hot anime!



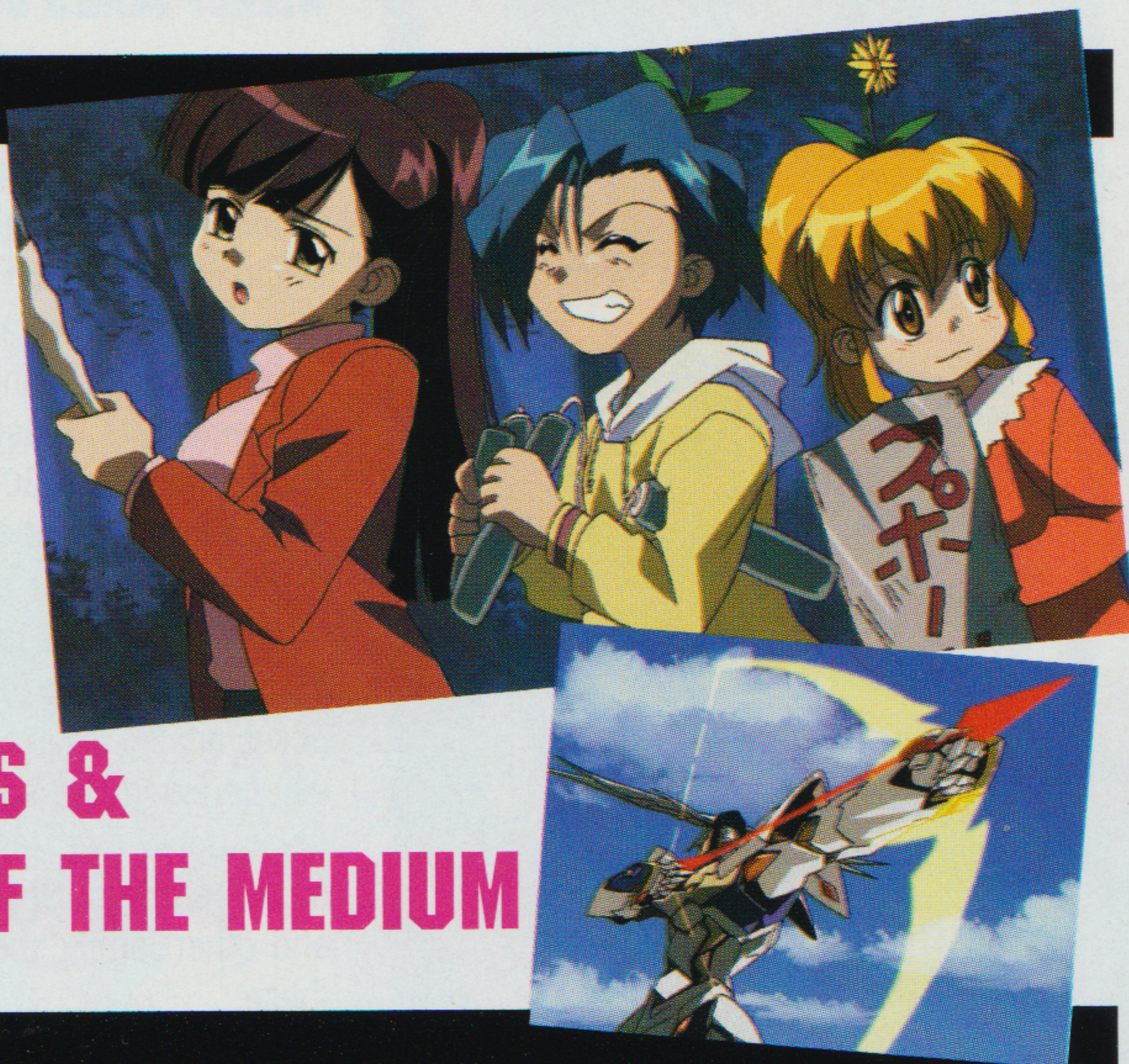
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ANIME TODAY

LAST YEAR'S HOT NEW SERIES &
A LOOK AT THE EVOLUTION OF THE MEDIUM

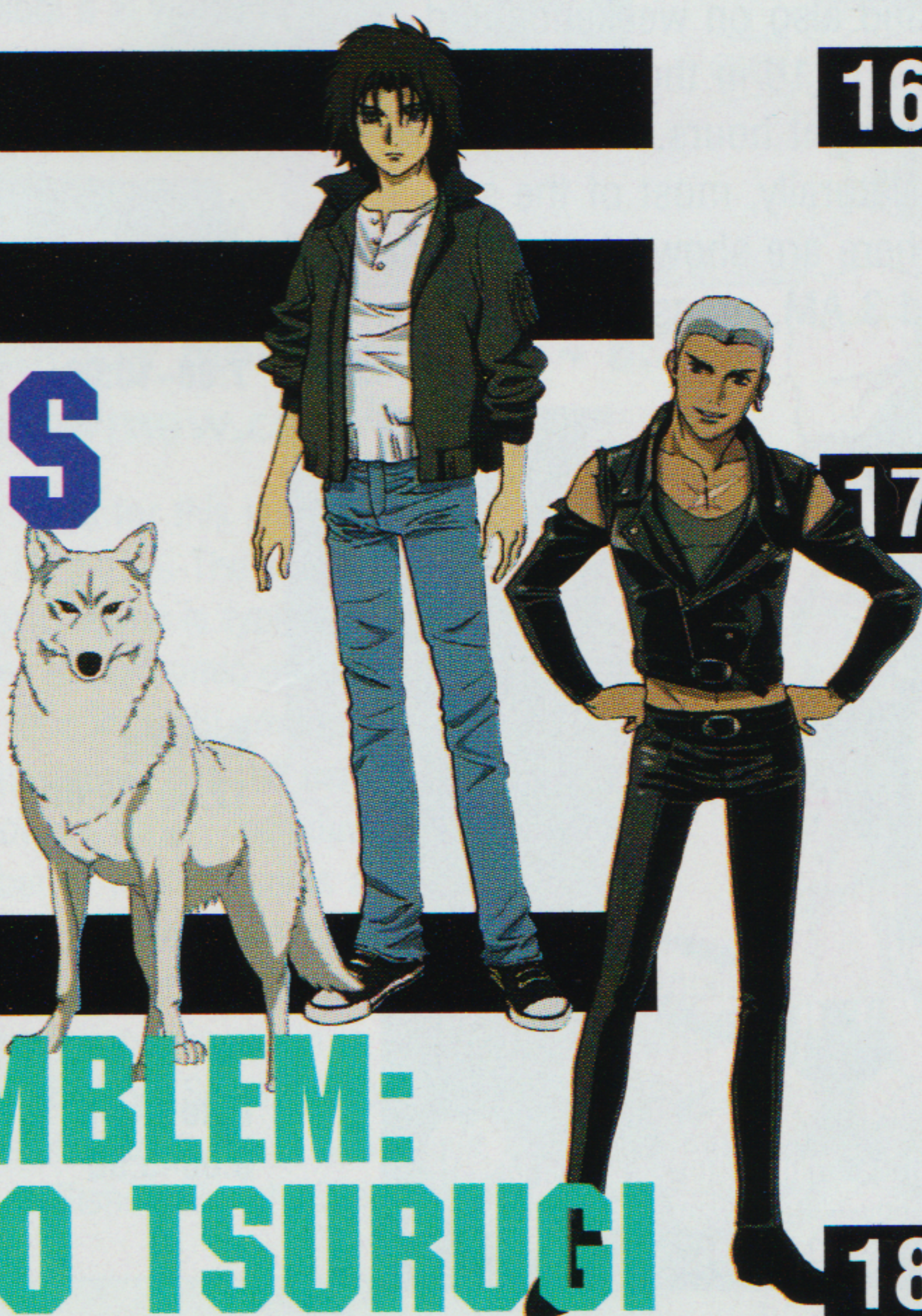


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**SPECIAL
FEATURE**

ANIME TODAY!

A CLOSE LOOK AT THE RECENT STATE OF ANIME IN JAPAN

THE STATE OF ANIME IN JAPAN HAS UNDERGONE HUGE CHANGES OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. IN THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL FEATURE, WE LOOK AT NEW ANIMATION, AND TALK ABOUT SOME OF THESE CHANGES. WHAT ANIME ARE JAPANESE FANS INTERESTED IN? HOW DO THEY WATCH IT? READ THIS FEATURE TO GET THE SCOOP ON ANIME AS IT IS NOW.



BROADCASTING OF ANIME IN JAPAN

WEEKLY SERIES CONSISTING OF 30-MINUTE EPISODES: THE MOST POPULAR FORMAT

Japanese anime is almost as a matter of course released on DVD and video in the U.S. these days. Most of the anime released in this manner is taken from series originally broadcast on TV in Japan.

Currently, there are more than 120 different series being broadcast on various channels here. Most of those are weekly shows, with one 30-minute show airing at a time. Most last for three months to a year, with a set number of episodes. The low end of the scale is 13 to 26 episodes, with a long series being 52 episodes. But, occasionally, an exceptionally popular show will be extended, sometimes for several (even up to over ten) years and a 100 or more episodes. Shows for young children and other family shows account for most of these.

Family-oriented anime is mostly broadcast on weekdays in the evenings until about 8 PM, and also on weekends and holidays from 7 to 10 in the morning. During the late-night hours, more adult fare is broadcast. Naturally, most of the shows we introduce here are shown late at night, between 1 and 3 AM, or, as we will explain

later, those shown on BS/satellite channels and UHF channels operated by small, local stations.

In addition to TV broadcasts, there are original video anime (OVA) and theatrical releases, the former having particular popularity in the U.S. And recently, several cable stations that broadcast anime 24 hours a day have begun producing their own shows. It can truthfully be said that in Japan, you can watch anime 365 days a year, 24 hours a day!

In a nutshell, that's the situation of broadcast TV anime in Japan today. The next section goes on to introduce specific shows, and what fans are saying about them.

A Day of TV Anime Broadcasting

Below is a look at one typical day of anime on Japanese TV, listing the shows and the times they were broadcast.

Day: Saturday Place: Tokyo

Morning
7:00~10:00

Mangetsu Wo Sagashite
Tokyo Mew-Mew
Wagamama Fairy Mirumo De Pon!
Shin•Megami Tensei: Devil Children/Light & Dark
Fortune Docs

Evening
17:00~20:00

Get Backers: Dakkanya
Kido Senshi Gundam Seed
Kasumin
Overman King Gainer
Crayon Shin-Chan
Tsuribaka Nisshi

Late-Night
0:00~5:00

Tenshi Na Konamaiki
Stratos 4
Nekketsu Denpa Club
Raimuiro Senkitan

The Long History of TV Anime

The first TV anime in Japan was Tezuka Osamu's **Tetsuwan Atom** ("Astro boy" in the U.S.), which began in 1963 and ran for four years. One 30-minute episode ran every week, making this the established format for anime today.

From **Tetsuwan Atom** onward, for about 40 years now, new anime is being introduced on the small screen on a regular basis.



The character that started it all returns to the scene in glorious form with "Astroboy—Tetsuwan Atom," which begins in Japan on April 6, 2003.

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WORKS BASED ON POPULAR MANGA REPRESENT THE MAJORITY

A lot of Japanese anime has always been made from popular manga and novels aimed at middle school and high school kids, but these last few years, the ratio of such shows has been even higher. They're a reasonably safe bet for producers, who count on the synergy of the having a very popular original work to bank on. In the evening golden hours, when more risky shows can't be shown, these "anime based on an original work" are most common.

Furthermore, because many of these anime series continue as long as the originals do, there are many of these really long series in Japan. It's not unusual for series to last several years, even up to over ten some instances. In a few cases, the anime has continued with original episodes even after the creator of the original has passed away.

NANAKA 6/17

TV Tokyo/ Wednesdays Late Night
2:35 ~ 3:05

<http://www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/nanaka/>

This anime is a recent addition, having begun in January. The original manga is still running in a *shonen* manga magazine. It's the story of young girl named Nanaka, who, after a serious accident, loses all memories past the age of six, and returns to the innocence of childhood. Her childhood friend then tries in earnest to keep people from becoming aware of this delicate situation. **Nanaka 6/7** is a slapstick romantic comedy that, like **Inu Yasha**, is originally based on a manga running in a *shonen* manga magazine. However, it's not as big as the former, the likely reason why the anime runs late at night.



TOKYO MEW MEW

TV Aichi & others/ Saturday Mornings 8:00 ~ 8:30
<http://www.tokyo-mewmew.com/>

The original work serving as the basis for this show is the comic of the same name that ran in a *shojo* manga magazine. The anime itself is broadcast on Saturday mornings, when fare for children is typically run. The original work serving as the basis for this show is the comic of the same name that ran in a *shojo* manga magazine. Given its popularity among children, the anime itself is broadcast on Saturday mornings, but still benefits from a significant adult following. Merchandising for the series, including children's toys, is already in full effect, and a number of related events and toy shows held serve to draw considerable young crowds with the amusing performances that they incorporate. Incidentally, the magazine this comic ran in is *Nakayoshi*, the same magazine that featured "Bishojo Senshi Sailor Moon." Incidentally, the magazine this comic ran in is *Nakayoshi*, the same magazine that featured "Bishojo Senshi Sailor Moon."



INU YASHA

YTV•NTV/Monday Evening 19:00 ~ 19:30

http://www.ytv.co.jp/anime/inuyasha_html/

This is the animated version of the manga by Takahashi Rumiko, who also created "Urusei Yatsura" and "Ranma 1/2." As many of our readers are likely aware, almost everything she has produced has been animated, with the animated versions also going on to become acclaimed hits. No exception to this rule, the **Inu Yasha** anime is already well past its 100th episode, and the manga continues to be popular in its weekly magazine of serialization. The story itself is about a girl who one day suddenly finds herself in long-ago Japan, and the adventures she has with a half-human, half-demon boy.



Plentiful Remakes

Manga and novels aren't the only sources for anime series. Popular anime series from the past and *tokusatsu* (special photography/SFX) series are also used. Recently, remakes of such older, classic series, and sequels to series that ended years ago, have been numerous. Occasionally, these projects serve to bring one-time anime fans back to the fold.



This series are animated versions of manga by famous artist Ishinomori Shotaro, and the third time "Cyborg 009 (THE CYBORG SOLDIER)" has been animated.



BROADCASTING PATTERNS CHANGE, AND SO DO TIMES

THE APPEARANCE AND NESTLING OF ANIME IN LATE-NIGHT TIME SLOTS

Previously, anime was broadcast mainly in the evening, considered "prime kiddy time." But some years ago, TV Tokyo began broadcasting anime in the wee hours of the morning, after 1 AM and similar times, and other channels quickly followed suit. Now, late-night anime is a staple of the genre. However, that's not to say that there were no

late night anime shows before this – in the 1980s, a short-lived series called "Lemon Angel" was shown late at night. But it's only recently that such a large amount of new series has been shown during these time slots..

ANIME PROGRAMS WITH THEIR HOME ON BS

At about the same time late-night anime was making it big on terrestrial channels, BS/satellite channels like public broadcasting's NHK-BS2 and subsequently private company WOWOW were introducing their own original anime series. One of the biggest hits among these was BS-2's "Card Captor Sakura."

Currently, original anime is also running on the newly-started satellite digital broadcast channel. The original hit series **Mahoromatic**, for example, is a digital broadcast.

NEW ANIME CAN ALSO BE CAUGHT ON UHF STATIONS!

But the most surprising development in anime for fans of the medium has to have been the appearance of original anime series, not just nationwide network reruns, on local UHF channels – a phenomenon that began about two years ago. But how can UHF channels, with their limited budgets, possibly afford to independently produce their own anime series? The truth is that they don't. In conjunctions with other UHF stations and cable channels, UHF stations run original shows at the same time, so it's not unusual to find the same show running on UHF, cable, and nationwide network channels

NEKKETSU DENPA CLUB

TV Tokyo (Broadcast Finished)/Now Being Shown on Local UHF Channels

<http://www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/denpa/>

This is a late-night anime that was broadcast on the mother of late night anime channels, TV Tokyo. The show was rare in that it was composed of two different series: "Rikujo Boei Shojo Mao-Chan," conceived primarily by Akamatsu Ken of "Love Hina" fame, and "Asagiri No Fujo," which represented the long-awaited anime version of the popular manga that ran in a magazine for young adults.

The show's format was relatively rare in Japan but the first series was more or less along the traditional lines of a "the beautiful girl next door" slapstick romantic comedy, the second a biography-style SF love story. Both can be considered fairly typical late-night fare. The show has already wrapped up on TV Tokyo, and is currently running on UHF and cable channels. Fans generally agreed that

"Mao-Chan" was the better of the two.



from "Rikujo Boei Tai Mao-chan"

The Various Anime Broadcasting Stations in Japan

Aside from major network terrestrial broadcast channels, prefectures and other major areas such as Tokyo all have one, and often two, channels of their own, and these channels are completely independent of the networks. Where major networks use VHF for their broadcasts, minor channels use UHF – and are therefore occasionally referred to as "U-channels" or local channels.

Among these, naturally, are many small channels that make little if any profit. They usually show local news shows and old shows purchased from the major network channels. Not many people ever imagined that these local channels would be broadcasting anime series not seen first on network channels.



from "Asagiri No Miko"

MAHOROMATIC: more beautiful thing

BS-i (Broadcast finished)

<http://www.mahoro-matic.com/>

This is the second season of the **Mahoromatic** series, in which former combat android Mahoro just wants to live out the remaining days of her life with her beloved master. The first series was BS Digital Channel's first original anime series, and the station received a continuous stream of new subscribers who just wanted to be able to see it. For the second season, also being shown on BS-i, the digital channel drew in even more fans. Sadly, the show has just ended, but it's currently on sale on DVD and video for those who failed to catch it during its BS run.



at the same time. See the blue area on p. 6 for more details about UHF stations.

THE CAUSES FOR THIS EVOLUTION IN ANIME BROADCASTING PATTERNS

Late-night anime and anime broadcast on UHF and other channels are generally shown during fairly minor timeslots, not watched by the average citizen. But even among those, there are some series that are so dense and complex that only hardcore anime fans would watch them, which is one of the merits of these late-night hours. But it's not just the adaptability of these time slots that has caused a change in anime – it's the way companies in anime-related business do this business that have brought about the most change. Let's look at these changes in greater detail on the next page.

PRINCESS TUTU

Sun TV, Kids' Channel & others
<http://www.Princess-tutu.com>

In this anime, humans and talking animals live together in a fairytale-like village. As the result of an unexpected encounter, a young girl studying ballet at a local school named Ahiru is granted the magical power to transform into Princess Tutu. Ahiru then takes it upon herself to search for the missing soul of Myuto, an upperclassman at her school who also represents the "prince" she admires. Throughout her search, she experiences many amazing adventures.

The first 13 episodes of this series were broadcast in regular 30-minute episodes, but from the second part, each episode is

divided into two 15-minute parts, with each part shown together with another short anime series called "Kiko Senyo Rolan."



RAIMUIRO SENTAI

TV Kanagawa, TV Saitama, others
<http://www.kss-inc.co.jp/anime/raimuירו/>

An anime series chiefly seen on UHF channels, this is an animated version of an *ecchi* game scripted by Akahori Satoru, who was also responsible for "Sakura Taisen." Generally, *ecchi* games are stripped, so to speak, of their risqué scenes and turned into console games, and then subsequently animated for TV. Cases like this, where the *ecchi* game is

animated as is, are extremely rare. This anime probably couldn't be shown on anything but a UHF channel. And even so, the *ecchi* scenes have been considerably diluted.



The Tradition of Family-Oriented Anime in Japan

No matter how much everything around it changes, anime retains one genre that remains steadfastly the same throughout time – family fare that parents and kids get together to watch from about 7:00 to 8:00 in the evening.

Although these basically represent kids' fare, for reasons stemming from either producers being aware that parents were also watching it their kids or Japanese anime, with its long tradition, having a broad pool of talent to draw from, the level of scripts and production of these anime works are very high, allowing adults to enjoy them as much as kids. This type of anime has yet to be given a real chance overseas, but there's no doubt that it is represents a facet of Japanese culture.

HAIBANE RENMEI

Fuji TV (Broadcast Finished)
<http://www.pldc.co.jp/rondorobe/anime/haibane/>

The mysterious world presented within this work is largely a product of Original Planner and Screenwriter Abe Yoshitoshi of "Iain" fame. Taking place in the Town of Guri, where humans and beings called "haibane" that, while neither human nor angels, possess wings and halos, coexist, the subtle story centers around its main character Rakka, who awakes from within a cocoon to become a haibane, and the daily exploits of her fellow haibane.

As the story progresses, the various mysteries surrounding the haibane, the alliance called the "Haibane Renmei" that protects them, and the Town of Guri as a whole gradually become clear.

As the celluloid version of the original *dojinshi* by Abe, reflecting the success and popularity of the original, this work holds a special meaning. Another interesting characteristic of **Haibane Renmei** is that the first half of the series was shown in weekly one-episode increments where the second half featured two episodes per week – an unusual pattern only possible with late-night broadcasting.



4 WITH THE INFLUX OF TV-THEATRICAL CROSSOVERS, OVAs ARE ON A DECLINE

ROBBED OF ITS POSITION BY LATE-NIGHT ANIME: THE OVA

OVAs, short for Original Video Anime, enjoyed a genuine boom during which they even became the mainstream format for anime in Japan. But in the past few years, the number of new OVA releases has

declined considerably. Undeniably the main reason for this is that anime that would have been released as OVAs in the past are now being made for late-night TV.

However, that's not to say that OVAs are no longer being released at all. There's a new movement of small, personal productions for which the OVA format is very nicely suited,

and they're also the medium of choice for anime that aren't appropriate for TV, such as anime versions of *ecchi* games.

On the other hand, theatrical releases have enjoyed steady production. Recently, many TV anime and theatrical releases have been linked through the so-called media mix process.

HOSHI NO KOE THE VOICES OF A DISTANT STAR

DVD/Published By Comics Wave/¥5,800/Approx. 80 Min.
<http://www2.odn.ne.jp/~ccs50140/stars/index.html/>



The man behind this acclaimed work, Shinkai Makoto is a freelance digital animation artist who creates his own SF anime. Aside from the voices and the music, he more or less handled the production of **Hoshi No Koe** by himself. This kind of process is extremely rare in Japan for this kind of anime, which you might call "*dojin* anime," to be released on DVD and sold in shops. But when you see the extraordinarily high quality of the work overall, it's not hard to understand why **Hoshi No Koe** received this kind of treatment. This anime has won many awards and more – the "Top Wo Nerae! Award" at the second annual Japan Otaku Awards and the Special Prize award at the sixth annual Japan Agency for Cultural Affairs Media and Arts Festival.



RAHXEPHON

Shochiku/Theatrical Release/Opens Nationwide April 19th
<http://www.rahxephon.com/>

This is a theatrical version of "Rahxephon," a late-night anime series that ran last year. A robot series full of mysteries, it was one of the most talked-about anime works in recent years. This movie won't be just a spliced-together reedit of the TV episodes though – not only is it mostly new animation, but it will apparently develop the story from a slightly different viewpoint that the TV series did. What will be the outcome



of the battle between Rahxephon, operated by the series hero, and the mysterious Dorem from another dimension? Furthermore, how many of the riddles left unsolved by the TV series will the theatrical release bring to a conclusion?

WILL THE WORLD OF ANIME IN JAPAN CONTINUE TO EVOLVE TO SUCH A DRAMATIC DEGREE?

With that, we bring our look at the trends and changes in Japanese anime over the last few years to a close. It's easy to see that Japanese anime has changed when one looks at the big picture, but why? The reason is fairly simple – the changes in the medium are due to changes in the way anime-related business has evolved, as discussed briefly on the previous page. It used to be that anime producers didn't count on the anime itself to make money – profits came from sales of character goods and toys. Taking the argument to its full conclusion, anime in the past could just be seen as representing

commercials for toy makers.

But, circumstances have changed. Selling the shows themselves has become more profitable than the toys. There are many reasons for this, but the upshot is that the anime is worth more than the toys. Up until now, projects that didn't fit toy sales' profiles were allowed to lapse into obscurity, but such shows are continuously being seen today. Furthermore, a variety of original independent projects are also being released one after another. For anime fans, it's an *oishii* situation – too good to be true.

Still, it's not a situation that fans should

enjoy without reservation. As mentioned before, there are more than 120 anime shows on TV every week. Some say that the anime business in Japan has already surpassed its production capacity. Should that be true, a slew of bankruptcies might be just around the corner.

Can the gargantuan Japanese anime industry, with its long history, continue at its current rate of development? Or will it collapse under its own immense weight? The question of where the animation industry in Japan will go from here is one that breeds tremendous speculation and anticipation.

3

WORKS THAT HAVE CAPTURED VIEWERS WITH THEIR MYSTERIOUS WORLDS AND FASCINATING STORIES

COMPLEXITY BIRTHS POPULARITY

Now let's look at the content and production of some recent anime. For the past few years, the most popular anime have been slightly difficult series with complex settings and mysteries of some kind running throughout the entire series. Every episode, portions of these mysteries

are subtly revealed through dialog or images – a style that succeeds in drawing in viewers.

Of course, this technique is not limited to the medium of anime. Games and novels also use it to broaden their storylines, revealing the entire story only at the end. For viewers, the real fun is in finding all the subtle clues and trying to figure out the

mystery before it is made apparent.

To digress slightly, the roots of this kind of anime can be found in the series "Shinseiki Evangelion." This year, the renewal of "Evangelion" is supposed to be completed, leaving us all in anticipation of just what track that "renewal" will take.

.hack//: LEGEND OF THE TWILLIGHT

TV Tokyo/ Late-Night 0:55 ~ 1:25

http://www.tv-tokyo.co.jp/anime/hack_udeden/

This series is a continuation of "hack//SIGN," a late-night series set in a future network game. In "hack//sign" the young hero found himself trapped, unable to log out of the game, and was forced to unravel the secrets of the game in order to escape. At almost the same time that the TV series was broadcast, the game and pack-in OVA based on the series, titled ".hack//kansen kakudai," went on sale. Viewers so inclined can totally immerse themselves in the world of .hack through experiencing all components of this package. Awaiting viewers is a very complex story in which the game world and the real world are intertwined.

Currently being broadcast, **Legend of the Twilight** takes place four years and a half after the "SIGN" game series.

THE BIG O

Sun TV, MX TV & others

<http://www.the-big-o.net/>

The second series of this robot anime is currently being broadcast. Forty years ago, the memories of everyone in Paradigm City, as well as all existing records, were wiped clean by some unknown incident. And for some

reason, the city is under attack by mysterious giant robots. Roger Smith and his personal giant robot Big O are the main characters, and their job is to protect the city from this invasion. But Big O seems to be hiding

something concerning the incident 40 years ago that robbed the city of its memories...



MAHOZUKAI NI TAISETSU NA KOTO: YUME THE MAGICAL DREAMER

TV Asahi/Thursday Late-Night 2:07 ~ 2:37

<http://www.yume-mahou.com/top.html/>

This anime has a story embedded with riddles – but more than that, it's based in a world that's just plain peculiar. The series is set in real-world modern-day Tokyo with just one difference – the use of magic represents an occupation here. In this world, there's a Magic Bureau, a national government office that regulates magic use and limits it to public officials belonging to the Bureau. And, governments being governments, if you want to use magic, you have to have a permit.

The main character here is Kikuchi Yume, a young girl who's come to Tokyo to study so that she can get

her magic permit. The story focuses on Yume, and doesn't deal with big occurrences, but rather with light, everyday things. The best way to watch this anime is to enjoy the atmosphere of Yume's world through her eyes.







RAINING
WEEKLY



ART GALLERY PIECE #13

十三

Today's TOPICS

Topic #1

ANIME

MORE PUSH FROM THE TOP: A SIGN THAT ANIME HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AS A "CULTURAL ART"?

The Development Bank of Japan, a federally-run financial institution, has started a loan system for promoting cultural and performing arts, among which anime is included. The aim is to streamline the management of theaters, performance halls and the like, which tend to bleed red, by incorporating the know-how of private institutions.

This system is an offshoot of the drive to "commercialize Japanese culture" that is being trumpeted by the government as one of its basic measures for structural reform, and is based on the Basic Law on the Promotion of Culture and the Arts — the aim of which is to augment cultural and artistic endeavors. The bank will make loans to a variety of cultural establishments at a standard interest rate of about 1.5% (in the case of a ten-year loan), and an

establishment can borrow up to 40% of its total debt.

The Basic Law on the Promotion of Culture and the Arts has classified not only literature, art, and theatre but also film, anime, *mandan* (comic monologue), and music as "cultural arts that should be protected and developed." Furthermore, facilities related to such cultural "offerings" are eligible for loan money. With the field of entertainment becoming more and more diverse, no small number of cultural establishments has fallen on tough times. To ensure that the recipients of loans don't bottom out, the Development Bank of Japan also takes in interest the post-loan management of its borrowers — it introduces them to companies and NPOs (non-profit organizations) that specialize in cultural- and arts-related business. It is expected that there

Tokyo International
Anime Fair 2003
Official Site:

http://www.taf.metro.tokyo.jp/index_n.html/

will also be cases in which the many public facilities that are slated for the axe because of the financial doldrums of local governments will be taken over and remodeled by private enterprises.

In an effort to promote and invigorate the anime industry, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government staged last year's Tokyo International Animation Fair 21 and will also serve as the home of the venue for the Tokyo International Anime Fair 2003 (Business Days/For Exhibitors Only: March 19-20, 2003; General Public: March 21-22, 2003). It is a thrill to see signs of government-initiated efforts to support anime on both the national and prefectural levels.



Topic #2

BOOK

THE "PERFECT BOOK" FOR TIMELESS ANIME!

On February 13, 2003, publisher Takarajima simultaneously released two anime fan books: **Kanzen Hazonban — Lupin the 3rd Perfect Book** and "Watashitachi No Suki Na Alps No Shoji Heidi ("Our Favorite Girl from the Alps: Heidi")." *Takarajima* is the infamous publisher of the self-titled weekly *Takarajima*, which boldly went where no other Japanese magazine was willing to go by showed glossy photographs of nudes featuring pubic hair at a time when such "hair nudes" were uncommon — remembering that Japan has strict laws regarding nude photographs. The magazine *Takarajima* is well-liked for the fact that it spotlights lots of hardcore, underground information. The unorthodox production sense of Takarajima's magazines and novels — they approach issues at an angle that

other publishers don't — is still very alive and well.

On March 2, 2002, Takarajima released **Nippon No Anime — All About Japan Anime**, which includes data on every work released over Japan's 85-year history of anime. This release was followed by that of a series of Gundam books one after the other: **Bokutachi No Suki Na Gundam** ("Our Beloved Gundam") (June 2002), **Bokutachi No Suki Na Gundam: Zen Tojo Character Tettei Kaiseki Hen** ("Our Beloved Gundam: Complete Analysis of All Characters") (October 2002), and **Bokutachi No Suki Na Gundam: Zen Mobile Suits & Mechanic Tettei Kaiseki Hen** ("Our Beloved Gundam: Complete Analysis of All Mobile Suits & Machines") (December 2002). There are already plans for a fourth title in the series.

Having also released the likes of **Ginga Tetsudo 999 Perfect Book** ("Galaxy Express 999 Perfect Book") (November 2002) and **Bokutachi No Suki Na Hokuto No Ken** ("Our Beloved Fist of the North Star")



(December 2002), Takarajima went on to become a leader in publishing *otaku* culture books aside from those covering anime, such as **Bokutachi No Suki Na Final Fantasy** ("Our Beloved Final Fantasy") (November 2002) and **Bokutachi No Suki Na Ultraman** ("Our Beloved Ultraman") (December 2002). All of these releases come packed with cool sections that give the books extra appeal. For example, **Ginga Tetsudo 999 Perfect Book** includes a section that takes its readers on a pleasure ride on the Galaxy Express — designed with the help of a real travel agency. Each book represents a labor of love by anime enthusiast editors and writers, so hardcore fans of the respective series won't be disappointed.

Topic #3

GAME

BACK-TO-BACK RELEASES IN ATTENTION-GRABBING LINEUP

The stallion software maker From Software, known for its solid game console entries, has released a slew of new titles, starting with "O•T•O•G•I" (Xbox) at the end of last year and continuing through this spring. In January of this year, **Armored Core 3: Silent Line** was released. Players can freely combine various different parts, from heads to arms to weapons, to develop their very own mech from one out of more than 10 billion possible mech patterns. The number of parts has been significantly increased over the previous release, with the total number of different parts reaching approximately 400. On top of this, the game also incorporates cockpit views and a system through which players can destroy enemy weapons. Deserving of particular note is the new system that allows players to develop their mechs, giving the game an extra angle. Saved mech development data can be used in competitive play at a friend's place as well.

In March, the "gardening battle" game **Thousand Land** is slated for release. The stage for the game is the virtual network "Geoslate." Here, players create their own

"Georama Map" and compete against their rivals, customizing their own map using their winnings and striving to design the best "private garden" in the world. The game is compatible with Xbox Live, allowing players to compete with actual rival landscapers across the world.

The first title in the ninja-action Tenchu series, "Tenchu," was released in 1998 and has sold over 1.4 million copies worldwide. The fifth title in the series, **TENCHU® Wrath of Heaven** is slated to appear on the PS2 in April 2003 and looks to continue the tradition of the series' action-intensive appeal. In addition to these, FromSoftware also plans the Spring release of an orthodox 3-D real-time RPG, **Shadow Tower Abyss** (PS2), as well as **Rune 2** (GC), the sequel the "Rune" RPG released in April 2002 that unfolds through card battles.

Despite the mix of sequels and new releases and the variety of genres, the unique feel of a FromSoftware effort is shared by each of these titles. Keep your eyes open for the latest news on these upcoming releases, which look to make a big splash in the gaming world.



Title: Britney Artist: Britney Spears
Release Date: Oct. 31, 2001
Price: ¥2,550 (tax incl.)
Britney Spears and "O•T•O•G•I" collaboration: "Overprotected" (featured on "Britney") was used in a Japanese TV commercial.

SILENT LINE
ARMORED CORE 3



Thousand Land

RUNE
THE SHADOW TOWER



SHADOW TOWER ABYSS

Topic #4

EVENT

A COLLECTABLES MELTING POT – TOY EVENT KEEPS PARTICIPANTS UP TO DATE WITH THE LATEST RELEASES!

The **Super Festival** (often shortened to "Su-Fesu" in Japanese) is a toy exhibition held by Art Storm (<http://www.artstorm.co.jp/>), which was featured indepth in RGA #5. In addition to Art Storm goods, the event also features exhibitions by a myriad of other makers, dealers, and individual shops, including Kotobukiya (<http://www.kotobukiya.co.jp/>), famous as a maker of garage kits, the collectables shop Blister (<http://www.blister.jp/>), which specializes in toys relating to U.S. comics, and Inukuma (<http://www.inukuma.com/>), a maker of full-scale figures. Compared to the Wonder Festival, where a large number of new assembly kits are for sale, the primary items on sale at this event are pre-painted figures and garage kits, in addition to other merchandise such as *shokugan* and prize products and T-shirts. The large number of U.S. comic-related toys and used goods of both Japanese and U.S. origin gives the event the overall feel of a flea market.

Furthermore, as this event is held every two or three months, the newest goods can be found each time the event is held. This event has also gained popularity for the fact that the illustrations on the front of the promotional flyers are drawn by Nirasawa Yasushi, whose artwork also graced the cover of RGA #5.



The twenty-eighth holding of the event, "Super Festival 28," will be held on April 29, 2003 in The Science Museum located in Tokyo's Kudanshita district. The photographs shown here are from "Super Festival 27," which was held at The Science Museum on January 12th this year.



WOLF'S RAIN

DATA

Broadcast by Fuji TV

Broadcast Time ● Late Monday Night, 2:25 AM

URL ● URL: <http://www.wolfs-rain.com/>

WOLF'S RAIN IS AN ANIME SERIES WORTH HOWLING ABOUT!

One of the latest in late-night anime offerings is this series from Bones, a company that has been responsible in its short history (it was founded just five years ago) for some of the more interesting anime in recent years, including "Rahxephon" and the "Cowboy Bebop" movie, "Tengoku No Tobira (Knockin' on Heaven's Door)."

Wolf's Rain is set in a bleak future. Much of civilization as we know it has been destroyed, and in the streets of the cities, gangs of kids scavenge for enough food to survive. The leader of one of these gangs is Tsume, who isn't what he seems. Tsume appears as a tall, lean, white-haired, black leather-clad hunk, but what he really is a wolf. Wolves are believed to have been extinct for over 200 years (looks like the environmental policies of the Bush administration at work...), but in fact, they've

just gone under cover disguised as human beings. One of the myths surrounding wolves is that they alone knew the way to *Rakuen*, or Paradise. Tsume runs into another wolf named Kiba (black hair, blue eyes, with a way of letting the wind coolly whip his clothes about) who despises Tsume for running with

humans. But Kiba runs into a crazy old wolf hunter and his dog, and gets shot. He escapes from lockup with the help of another wolf, Hige. Kiba decides to find *Rakuen* ("You can't even see the light of the moon here."), and something he smelled (*Tsuki No Hana*, or "Moon Flower") while he was in police headquarters leads him to the conclusion that the road to *Rakuen* is through that building.

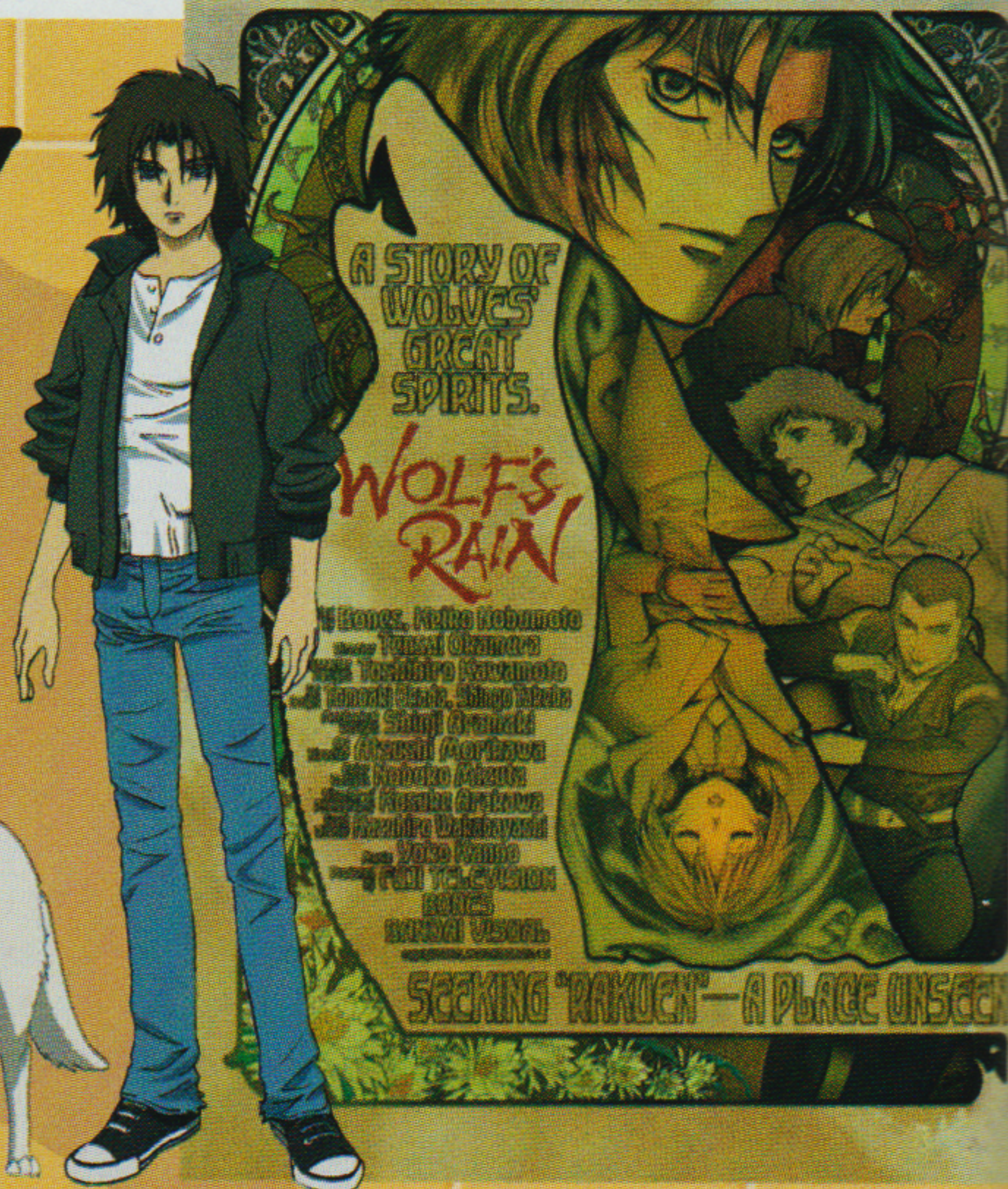
They meet a fourth wolf, Toboe, who is still very young and inexperienced, having lived all his life with an old woman who recently died. Even the crows scare Toboe (of course, if they're anything like Tokyo crows, it's no wonder), and he often freezes in dangerous situations ("I was getting ready to act!"), which often puts those with him in danger – but he's just so cute that all is forgiven. After running into a mysterious man (looking like a Malice Mizer group member) who has kidnapped a mystery girl out of a mysterious laboratory (Have I mentioned yet that there are a lot of mysteries in this series?), who can see them as wolves, and whose parting words are "See you in *Rakuen*," the four rather reluctant partners escape the city and strike out for *Rakuen*, though they really don't exactly know the way.

The production values of **Wolf's Rain** series are extremely high. The screenplay is by Nobumoto Keiko ("Cowboy Bebop"),

character designs are by Kawamoto Toshihiro ("Bebop"), and it's directed by Okamura Tensai ("Bebop," "Kikaider The Animation"). The colors are clear and crisp, it's animated extremely fluidly – and then there's the music. The name Kanno Yoko ("Bebop," "Turn A Gundam," "Macross Plus," "Escaflowne") as composer on a series is pretty much a guarantee of good listening, and this on is no exception. If there's one small caveat, it's the opening and closing credits, which are sung in English. English credits almost never do justice to Japanese shows – there's something about the banality of the lyrics and the different sensibilities of the writers that just make them a degree off. These are saved by the fact that the music itself is written by Kanno, so at their core, they're excellent tunes.

Now, I'd like to ask all (or almost all) of you guys reading this review to step back a few paces – you probably won't want to hear the rest of this. OK ladies, listen up. This is one of the most drool-worthy series to come along in years. I mean, come on – great-looking guys in a whole range of styles – AND they turn into wolves! Does it get any better than this?

OK guys, come on back in. This series is highly recommended for everyone – plenty of adventure, a gripping story, and great music. Check it out! **Written by MARY KENNARD.**



GAME FOCUS

▶ ゲームフォーカス ◀

Fire Emblem FUIN NO TSURUGI

DATA

Publisher ● Nintendo

Platform ● Game Boy Advance

Available ● March 29, 2002

Developer ● Nintendo

Genre ● Simulation-Role-Playing

Price ● ¥4,800

A SERIES FOR PATIENT GAMERS, FIRE EMBLEM WILL WEAR OUT YOUR RESET BUTTON

It's hard to believe that thirteen years has already passed since the appearance of "Monsho No Nazo" ("The Mystery of the Crest"), the first installment in the **Fire Emblem** series that introduced the SLG-RPG genre to the Famicom. Following the subsequent availability of four additional entries in the series, which included *gaiden* (side-stories) and remakes, the fifth **Fire Emblem** installment, **Fuin No Tsurugi** ("The Sealed Sword"), was introduced on the Game Boy Advance platform last spring. While five entries in a series that has continued for over ten years now is hardly a impressive number, the large presence of enthusiastic fans that support **Fire Emblem** even today speaks for the series' ongoing popularity.

Taking place in a land of swords and magic, **Fuin No Tsurugi** presents as its main character Roy, who has embarked on a quest to help safeguard his kingdom from invasion. Little did he know that an epic struggle between men and dragons would be awaiting him. Throughout each chapter of Roy's adventure, a number of interesting characters and dramatic encounters present themselves. Defeating the various bosses and securing the castles scattered about the game's world map through turn-based battles results in the stage being cleared. Swords, bows and arrows, and magic are at Roy's disposal to be used against the foes that stand in his way.

Although each **Fire Emblem** installment incorporates some minor changes in the game system, when examining the series as a whole, one can't help but be surprised at the utter lack of change in the basic

character settings and story development featured throughout — a degree of consistency across each installment that is arguably unmatched by any other series. Despite this, the franchise boasts a large number of addicted fans that encourages Nintendo to continue releasing additional sequels. Why? If a party dies within the game, it is impossible to resurrect it. Manual saving can only be performed between chapters. Furthermore, the auto-saving function present when moving about on the world map prevents players from loading data from a sequence prior to one in which a party killed. Therefore, in order to ensure that a chapter is cleared without the loss of any parties, it is necessary to reset the game and play the chapter from beginning should a party die in battle. Although there are some parties that can acceptably be left dead due to their being a nuisance to look after, the elimination of certain parties means that one won't be able to see the true ending of the game despite completing it. Additionally, when parties are lost, the sense that one has completed the game is admittedly diminished. The end result is that in order to create continually strong parties that can proceed throughout the adventure without dying, players will reset the game time and time again in order to ensure that each chapter is cleared with all characters surviving, and with heightened parameters at that.

With that, it goes without saying that **Fuin No Tsurugi** and the **Fire Emblem** series as a whole is not something for everyone. Put bluntly, it's a gamer's game, and one for those with patience, at that.

Still, fans of SLG-RPG titles that enjoy strong character emphasis and the satisfaction of progressing through challenging game scenarios as a party will enjoy this title to the fullest.

Written by ISOGAI AYAKO.



QB and VIVI's OTAKU 缶

ACT
16

ANIME'S ALL ABOUT TIMING!

BY KYUBI TAKAKO

QB HERE.
EVERYONE MAKING SURE TO
CHECK OUT ALL THE ANIME
YOU WANT TO WATCH?

PLAGUED BY THE
"VIDEO-AND-DVD-AIN'T-
ENOUGH" SYNDROME?

RIGHT NOW IN JAPAN,
THERE ARE LIKE A 100-
PLUS ANIME PROGRAMS
ON TV EVERY WEEK.

YOU GOTTA WONDER
WHO'S DRAWING
THEM ALL...

THINK ABOUT IT —
IF THERE'S 10 PROGRAMS YOU WANT TO
CATCH EVERY WEEK,
THAT MEANS YOU'LL END UP WATCHING
AROUND 40 ANIME A MONTH!

40 ANIME X 30 MIN. = 1,200
MIN....

FAITHFUL VIEWING OF ALL OF THEM MEANS
FAITHFUL RECORDING OF ALL OF THEM, WHICH
MEANS YOUR ROOM'LL END UP A SEA OF
VIDEOTAPES.

IT CAN'T BE HELPED, THOUGH —
I MEAN, WHO HAS TIME TO
WATCH 40 ANIME A MONTH!?

NOT LIKE YOU'D
HAVE TIME TO
WATCH ALL THESE
TAPES, EITHER.

WITH THAT IN MIND, QB MADE THE
DECISION ONE DAY TO STOP TAPING
EVERY SINGLE SHOW SHE WANTED TO
WATCH.

I FIGURED, IF I MATCH MY
SCHEDULE TO THE TV
BROADCAST TIMES, THAT
SHOULD BE ENOUGH...

PROBLEM IS THAT FROM LEAVING THE
TV ON ALL THE TIME, I STARTED
WATCHING ANIME EVERY WEEK THAT I
HAD NO INTENTION OF SEEING TO
BEING WITH.

OH, NO...NOT
AGAIN...

AND BEFORE I REALIZE IT, THE NEXT
EPISODE OF AN ANIME I THOUGHT I
JUST SAW IS ALREADY BEING AIRED!

NO WAY IT'S BEEN A
WEEK ALREADY!

THE RATE AT WHICH ANIME IS
CHURNED OUT IS REALLY
SOMETHING ELSE...

ONCE IN A WHILE, I TUNE
INTO AN ANIME FOR THE
FIRST TIME, ONLY TO FIND
OUT IT'S ALREADY THE
FINAL EPISODE.

GUESS YOU'RE
GETTING ON IN
OTAKU YEARS.

CLOSE-UP!

A Special Page Bringing RGA Readers Info on American SEGA Releases Directly from SOA

WORLD SERIES
BASEBALL 2K3BYOC — BRING YOUR OWN
CRACKERJACK

SEGA put one over the fence last year with its Xbox-exclusive diamond contest, but this year, the boys of summer are sliding home on the PlayStation 2 as well. Visual Concepts (VC), the dream team behind SEGA's all-star "NBA 2K" and "NFL 2K" franchises, has taken its second swing at SEGA's long-standing baseball franchise (the Saturn editions were some of the best representations of baseball ever digitized), and this latest swinger is the best to step up to the plate yet.

SEGA is getting the full mileage out of its recently acquired ESPN license. Not only do the menu system and screen pop-ups bear the familiar sports network stylings, but the game also employs ESPN's trademark K-Zone. The nifty on-screen display automatically renders a pitch's trajectory as it screams toward the plate. It also reveals

the three-dimensional path of the bat, as well as where the ball was hit. Not only does the whole effect just look neat, but smart players will analyze the K-Zone for ways to improve their pitching and batting.

This year's litany of play improvements includes a much-needed fielding revamp. Instead of just a speed rating, players now possess multiple variables, like strength and accuracy, that determine their performance. Catches at the wall are also under your control, so if you bungle the jump, you only have yourself to blame in **World Series Baseball 2K3**. It's worth practicing, because not only are the wall jump animations pretty slick, but a good catch in the ninth can turn the tide. The Create-A-Player mode now has tons of new options, including more tweakable stats and uniform selection. VC has also added a Power Swing option, for those who feel like you could show Casey a thing or two. Make dead-on contact with the ball while engaging Power Swing, and you have a sure-fire homer.

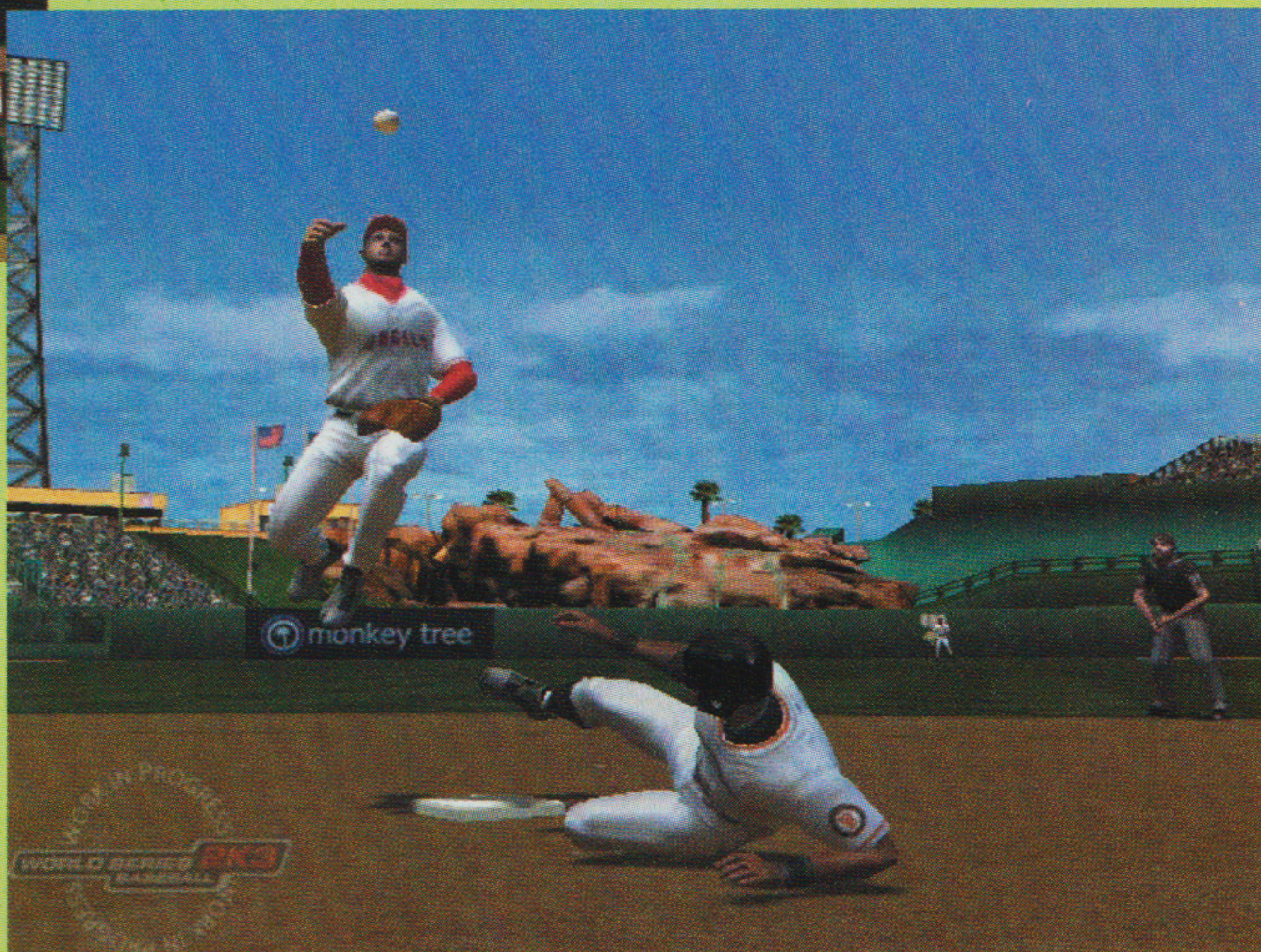
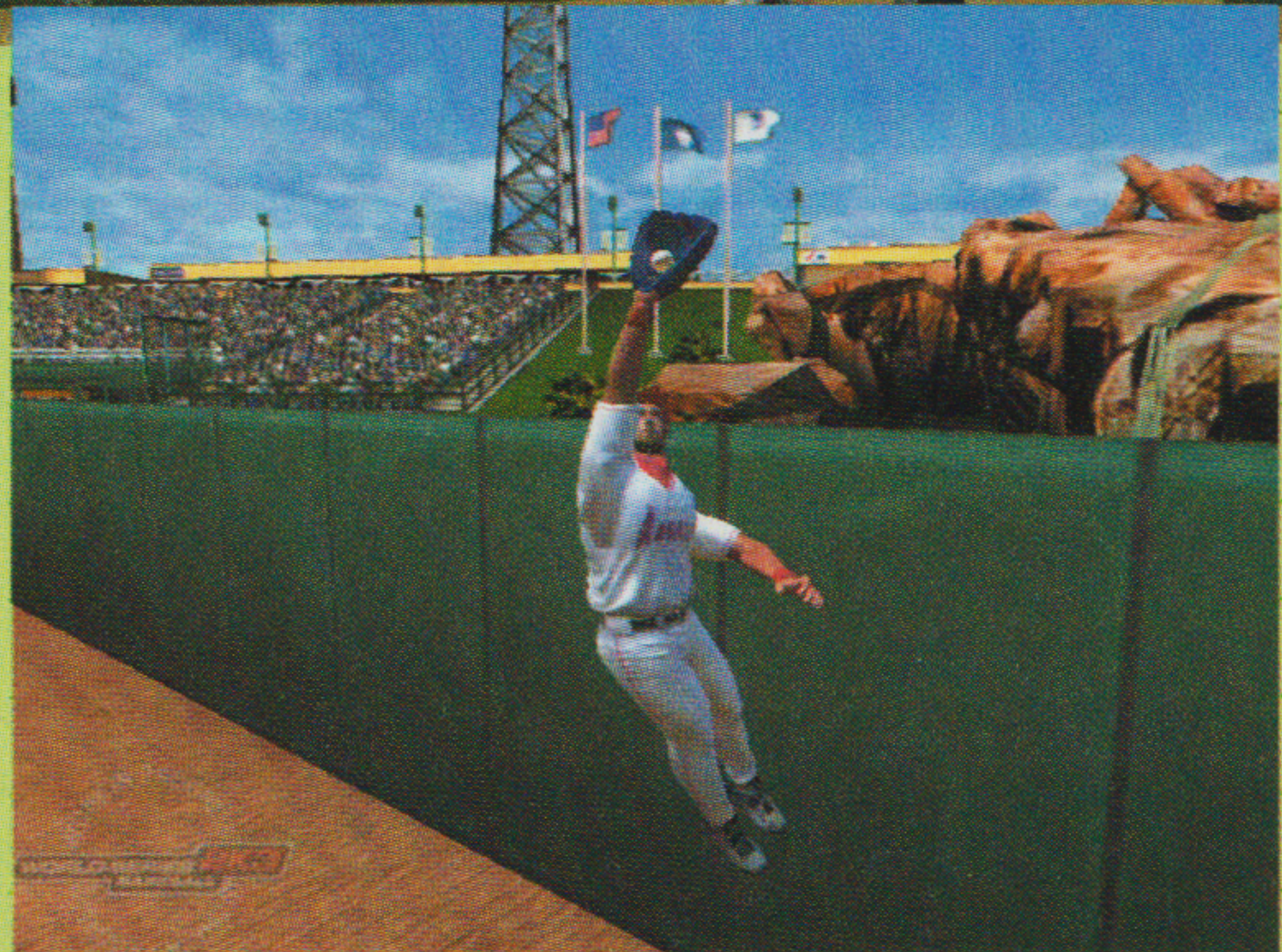
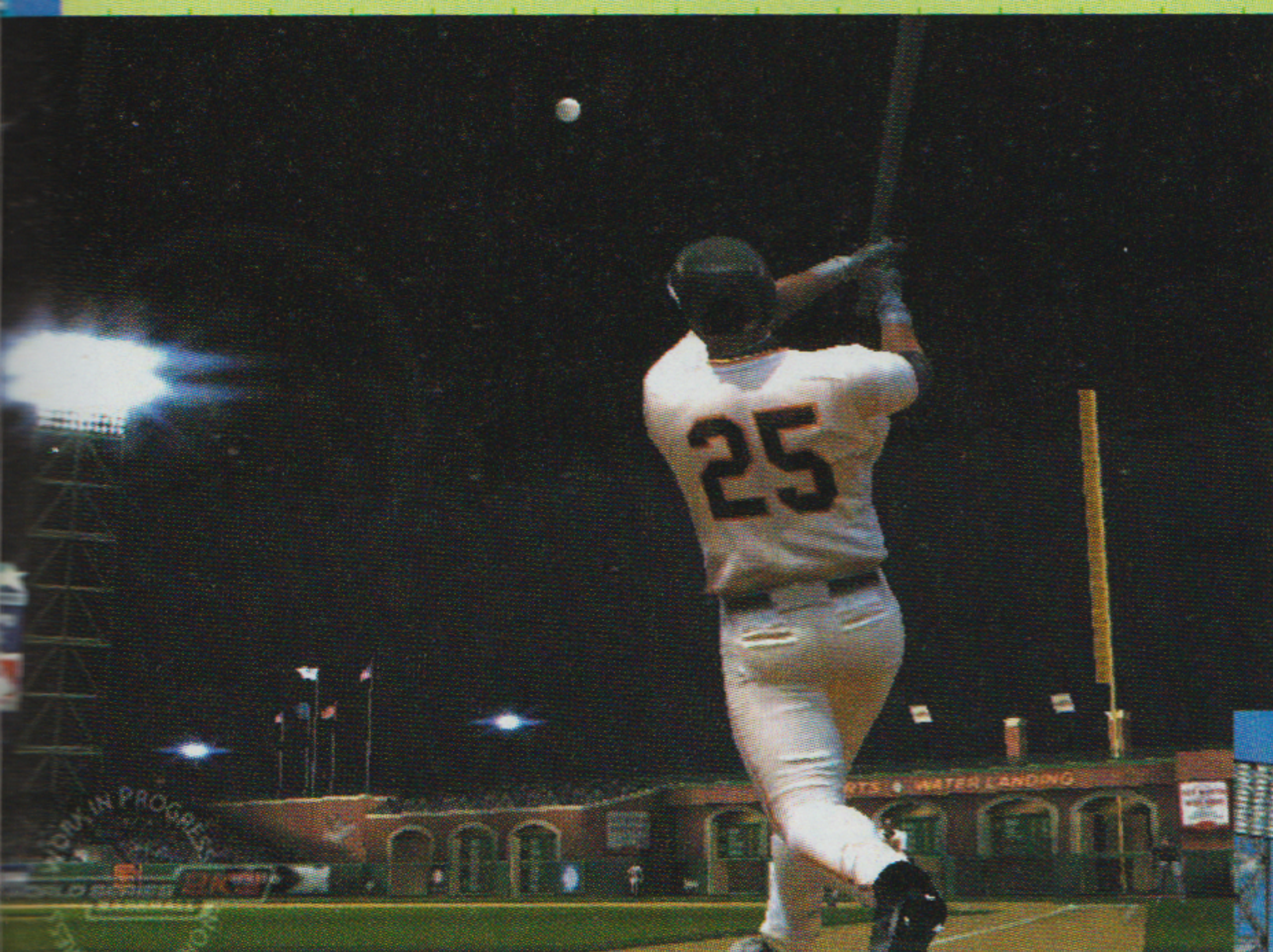
However, going for that dinger is gonna cost you the size of your contact zone, offering a greater chance to whiff it — badly. The Franchise Mode has been significantly beefed up for **2K3**, allowing for easier bench management and new stat tracking. Even your scout now has a set of

stats to follow, so you'll know if he's better at scoping batters or pitchers. Best of all, a pitching view is now selectable during single-player games, goosing up the intensity of being on the mound.

As expected, the visuals are outrageous — even better than last year's Xbox beauty queen. Every single park is stunningly present, polygonally-rebuilt with a meticulous eye for detail. Same goes for the player models, which look mesmerizingly real, thanks to over 500 new player animations that include some authentic moves from yesteryear players, such as Bob Gibson's original batting stance. SEGA has also included tons of extra classic uniforms for the teams, allowing you to faithfully recreate some of the more historical matchups over baseball's storied past. The MLB even allowed VC to draft up neo-classic uniforms for teams that haven't been around for very long, so you don't have the old-school Yankee cottons mixing it up with ugly 70s polyester.

Last year's "World Series Baseball" was the return of a dynasty and **2K3** continues SEGA's dominance in vid baseball. **2K3** shipped just in time for the start of the season, so when you're tired of yelling at the ump for busting on your fave team, you can retreat to the digital diamond where the only person you can yell at for not catching a stolen base is yourself.

Written by LEVI BUCHANAN.



NEXT ISSUE PREVIEW

The wave of brand-new TV anime series that hit Japan last fall continues unabated into this spring, and next week's Special Feature provides a close-up on twelve of RGA's top picks for this season. Familiarize yourself with the works currently setting the anime scene in Japan ablaze, and pump yourself up for what may be potential future anime releases in the West!

SPECIAL FEATURE

JAPAN'S SPRING TV ANIME LINEUP



Madhouse brings us the latest in the saga of "Jubeininpuchō" — also known as the mega-popular "Ninja Scroll" in the West!



Flight — a common theme this season? Either way, both "Wandaba Style" and "Last Exile" are out of this world!



REGULAR ARTICLES

Anime Focus
Stratos 4



Game Focus
Clock Tower

SEGA OF AMERICA HEDGEHOG EXPRESS
Sega Arcade Gallery

... and more!!



ISSUE #18



甘納豆 NO.0000017
Amanatto Up in Smoke 漫画: COM

春は新作アニメがいっぱい始まるっ!!

今回も録りまくるぞ~!!



A lot of new anime shows are coming our way this spring as well!
And I *was* planning on recording 'em all, except...

...とあったが、こーせDVDが出るので

今回はムダな録画はしないことにしたっ!



... after hearing from my friend last week that they're all coming out on DVD, I decided not to bother with any more pointless recording!



なっ!?

アニメスタジオで火事!!

フィルム、データ焼失!!
ソフト化は絶望的!!



"Giant quantities of film containing anime works were lost when a fire broke out in a major animation studio. This in effect eliminates any future chance for these works, originally broadcast on TV, to be released on retail formats."
BULLS—T!

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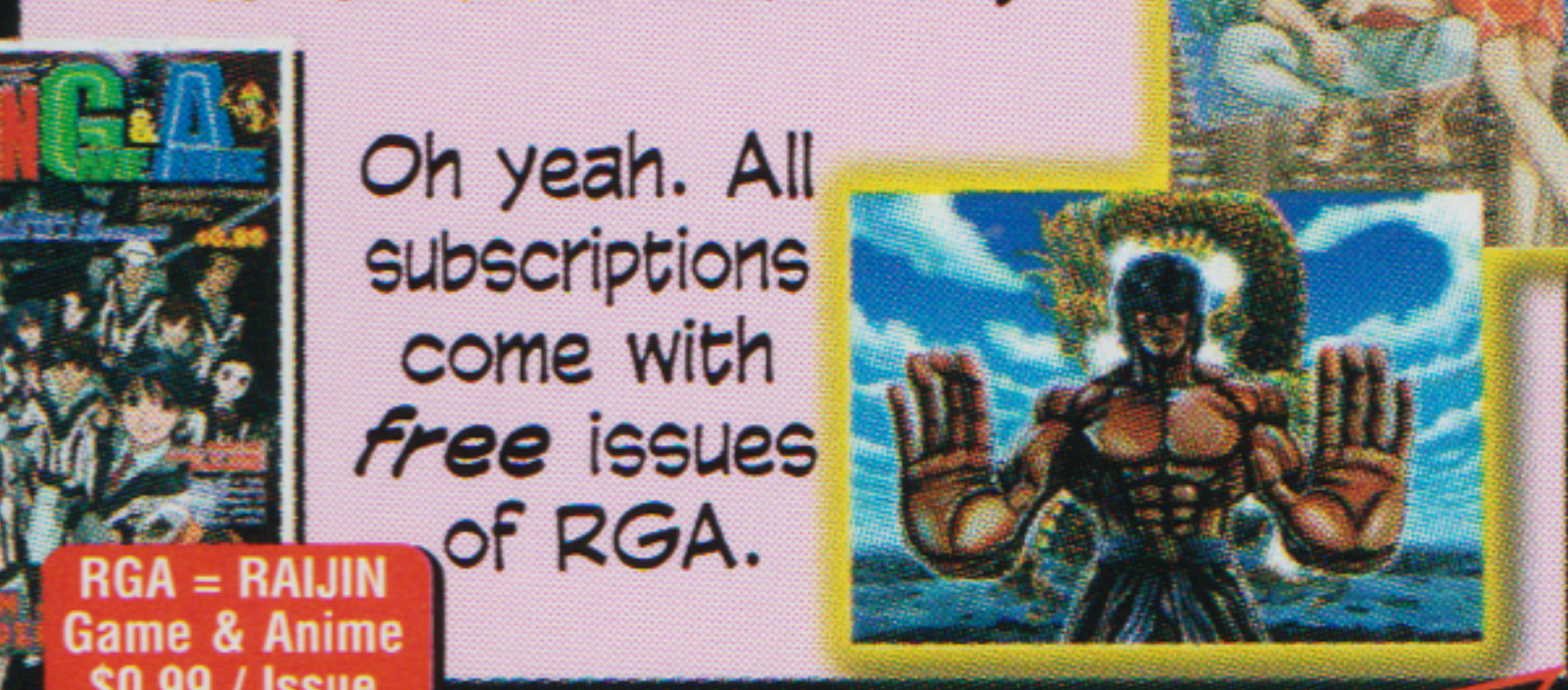


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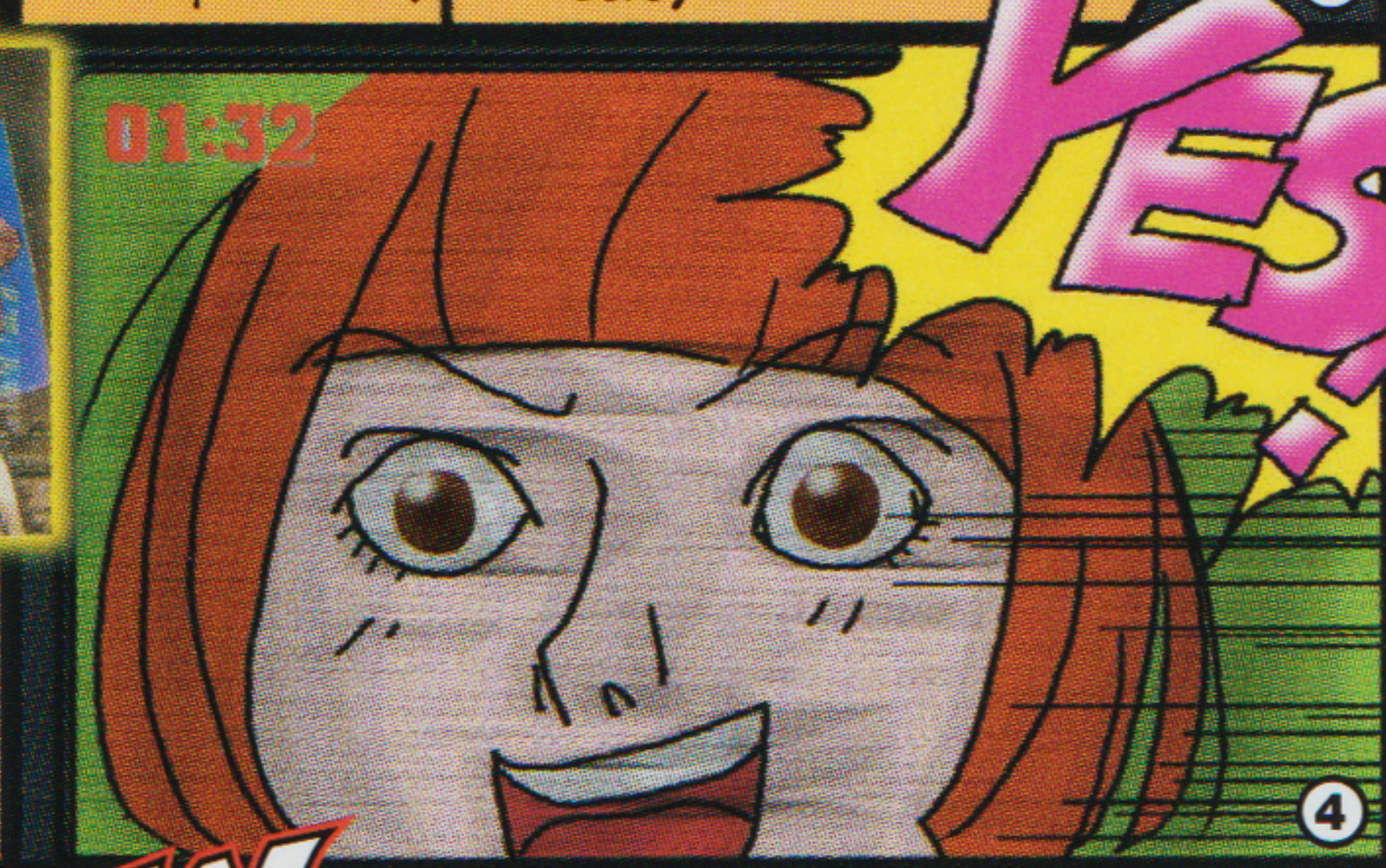
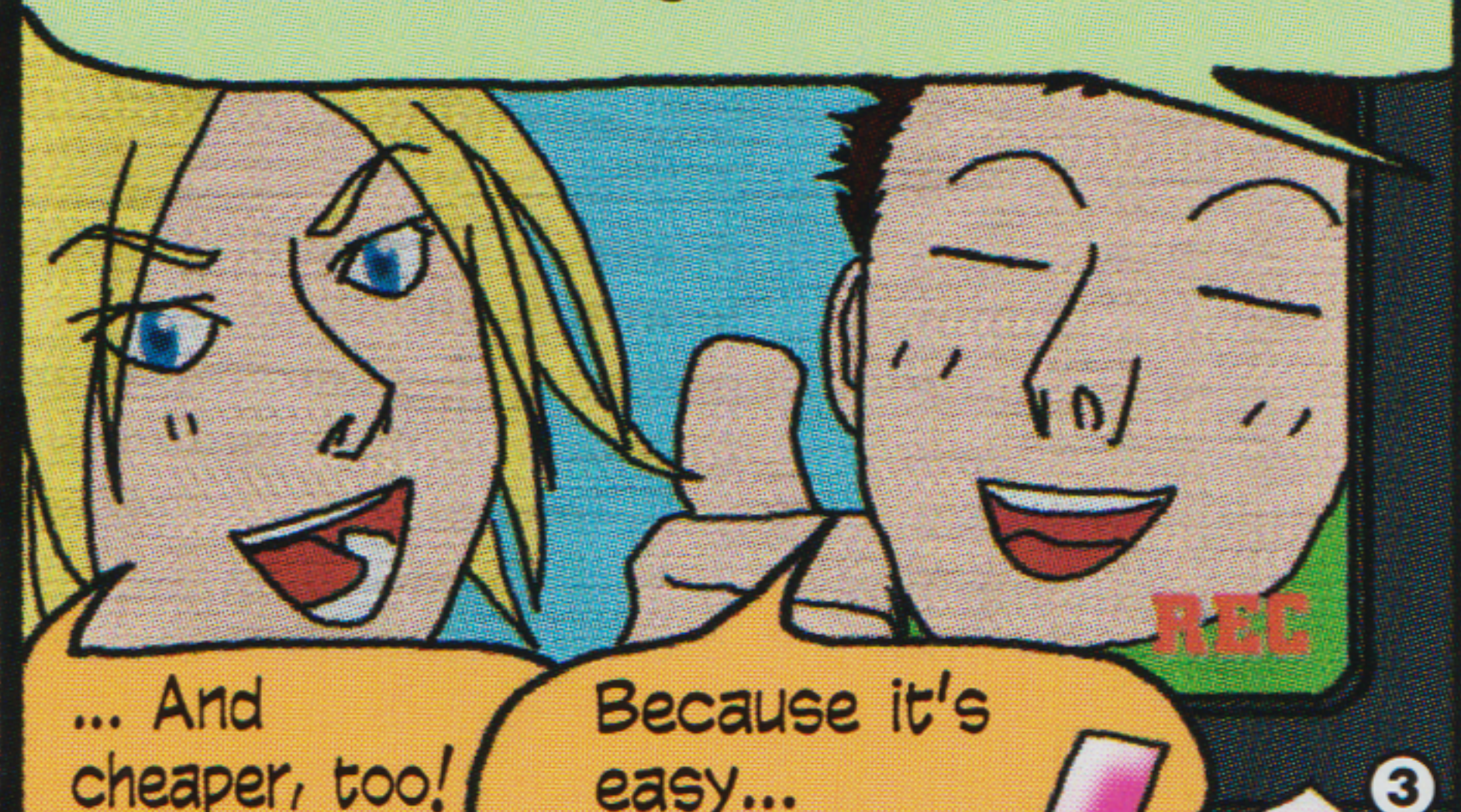
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